



FEMA

October 4, 2012

Frank DeMarco, CFM County of Hawaii 101 Pauahi Street Suite 7 Hilo, HI 96720	Mario Siu-Li, CFM City & Co. of Honolulu 650 South King Street 7 th Floor Honolulu, HI 96813	Wynne Ushigome, P.E. County of Kauai 4444 Rice Street Suite 175 Lihue, HI 96766	Francis Cerizo, CFM County of Maui Dept. of Planning 250 South High Street Wailuku, HI 96793
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RE: Vertical Datum References on the Flood Insurance Rate Maps for Hawaii County, City and County of Honolulu, Kauai County, and Maui County

Dear Mr. DeMarco, Mr. Siu-Li, Ms. Ushigome, and Mr. Cerizo:

This letter is in response to recent inquiries concerning the vertical datums used for the Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs) published by the Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency for the counties in Hawaii. A vertical datum is a set of reference points from which elevations are determined. Without a common vertical datum, surveyors would measure different elevation values for the same location. Historically, the most common vertical datum in the United States has been National Geodetic Vertical Datum of 1929 (NGVD29). NGVD29 does not technically exist for the State of Hawaii. However, flood elevations on older FIRMs for Hawaii were labeled with NGVD29.

The current vertical datums in Hawaii are Local Tidal Datum (LTD), which is based on tidal observations for each island. LTD in Hawaii is also called local mean sea level. Many have used NGVD29 and LTD interchangeably. Consequently, flood elevations on FIRMs for Hawaii in the past were labeled NGVD29. Clarifying terminology has become more important with recent FIRM revisions. The vertical datum for flood elevations on newer FIRMs for Hawaii is being labeled LTD. In summary, NGVD29 and LTD on FIRMs, elevation certificates and other FEMA related documents are the same in Hawaii for flood insurance purposes.

I trust this letter reduces future confusion on vertical datums for Hawaii; feel free to distribute this letter to surveyors, insurance agents and others using FIRMs. Should you have any questions regarding flood hazard mapping, please do not hesitate to contact Eric Simmons of my staff at (510) 627-7029 or via e-mail at eric.simmons@fema.dhs.gov. The Hawaii Department of Land and Natural Resources is also available to assist on this matter. One may reach Carol Tyau-Beam, P.E., CFM, at (808) 587-0267.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Raylenburg". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Raymond Lenaburg, Chief
Risk Analysis Branch
Mitigation Division

cc: Carol Tyau-Beam, Hawaii Department of Land and Natural Resources, State NFIP Coordinator
Edward Carlson, NOAA Pacific Services Center, State Geodetic Advisor